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Letter dated 21 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the final communiqué of the International Conference on e-Government for Development, held in Palermo on 11 April 2002 (see annex). The Conference was organized by the Government of Italy, with the support of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the special meeting of the General Assembly on information and communication technologies for development, to be held on 17 and 18 June 2002.

(*Signed*) Sergio **Vento**

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Annex to the letter dated 21 May 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

International Conference on e-Government for Development

Final Communiqué

11th April 2002

Palazzo dei Normanni - Palermo, Italy

The International Conference on e-Government for Development organized by the Government of Italy with the support of the United Nations was held on 10 and 11 April 2002 in Palermo. It gathered over 500 high-level participants from government, civil society and business from more than 90 countries. International organizations were also represented at the highest level.

The event was opened by Mr. Lucio Stanca, Minister for Innovation and Technology of the Government of Italy, H.E. Ivan Simonovic, President of ECOSOC, Mr. Nitin Desai, Under Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, Mr. YoshioUtsumi, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, Mr. Peter Harder, Deputy Minister of Industry Canada and President of the DOT Force. It was closed by H.E. Pascal Affi N'Guessan, Prime Minister ofIvory Coast, H.E. Pandeli Majko, Prime Minister of Albania, H.E. Pascoal Mocumbi, Prime Minister of Mozambique, H.E. Muhammad al-Ghanoushe, Prime Minister of Tunisia and H.E. Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister of Italy.

The International Conference is part of the Italian Initiative on e-Government for Development, a multi-million effort that combines advocacy with funding development projects. For its implementation, the Government of Italy has established with the United Nations a Trust Fund that in its initial phase will finance e-Government projects in Albania, Jordan, Mozambique, Nigeria and Tunisia. The Government of Italy, by signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the World Bank, has also agreed to become a funding member of the Development Gateway Foundation.

The Conference explored the potential of applications of information and communication technology (ICT) in government operations. It also provided a platform for the members of the GB Digital Opportunity Task Force (DOT Force) and the United Nations Information and Communication Technology Task Force (UN TCT Task Force) to debate major issues related to bridging the digital divide and spreading the benefits of the digital revolution all over the world.

Participants focused on the promise that ICT applications carry for good governance, economic growth and human development. They had the opportunity to examine the impact of ICT applications in public administration by reviewing over 40 international best practices.

The Conference recognized that the growing integration of the world economy and the increasing importance of knowledge in people's work and life create new expectations and demands with relation to government operations. They relate to efficiency I effectiveness, transparency and accountability. The demonstration effect of best practices in each of these areas is widely available and people from all parts of the world have started to-demand that they become part of their life experience. More and more this process challenges all governments regardless of the level of their development.

The Conference confirmed that as governments undergo transformation to respond to this challenge, introduction of ICT to their operations proves revolutionary. It can lower the cost of reform and increase its effectiveness in Unprecedented ways. This led to experimentation with multitude of useful ITC applications in government operations. They are noteworthy for their capacity to improve the fiscal position of governments, to increase confidence of investors, trade partners and donors, and to win greater trust of the public at large. They have the potential to dramatically broaden political participation, to increase access to information about the ways in which governments operate, to helping knowledge acquisition and utilization. The most valuable among them empower people, raise their capabilities, and expand their access to life choices and opportunities. As such, they are as much about enhancing public administration as about improving the ways in which a society governs itself. E-Government facilitates good governance, the cornerstone of the vision of a peaceful, prosperous and just world, as outlined in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, adopted by Heads of States and Governments in September 2000.

The political momentum behind transformation of government and governance is not equally pronounced the world over. Levels of leadership, policies, laws, regulations, strategic public investments, education, including ITC education, and connectivity differ. Furthermore, the willingness to share experiences and mobilize resources needs decisions and catalytic actions. These must be rooted in solidarity with the disadvantaged countries and groups of population, in respect for diversity of cultures and recognition of the importance of a fully participatory approach.

This understanding underpins the activities of the United Nations that through the decisions of the Economic and Social Council and the initiatives of the Secretary-General aims at bringing the benefits of ITC to all people in the

world and at putting them at the service of poverty reduction. This understanding underpins also the activities of the G8 that during its recent Summit Meetings in Okinawa (2000) and Genoa (2001) confirmed the will of the most developed countries to bridge the digital divide.

In view of the above, the Conference recognized that:

e-Government initiatives should be measured by the degree to which they contribute to good governance, empowering people, raising human capabilities and increasing people's access to life choices and opportunities.

e-Government initiatives and projects must be put in the context of broad government reform and transformation process that aims at increased efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government operations.

e-Government initiatives must be put in the context of a broad enabling environment, in which leadership, education and connectivity constitute the indispensable ingredients.

e-Government initiatives based on international cooperation must be participatory in their design and implementation, build on the existing local strengths and capacities and be respectful of local culture and traditions.

Building an e-Government should be a gradual process in which broad support is won by clear demonstration of advantages of ITC application to government operations in areas of public interest.

These principles should be reflected in the Plan of Action on e-Government for Development to be presented at the next G8 Summit.

Finally, the participants recognized the Conference as a milestone in the global dialogue on ITC for development. This dialogue must be continued and the forthcoming G8 Summit in Canada (Kananaskis, 2002) and the World Summit on the Information Society (Geneva, 2003 and Tunis, 2005) will provide such an opportunity. They also recognized the Italian Initiative as an important, concrete follow up to the Monterrey Consensus on development assistance and invite the donor community to join this Initiative to maximize and widen its impact.

Participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Italy and the United Nations, organizers of the Conference, as well as to the Region of Sicily, the Province of Palermo and the Municipality of Palermo for their warm hospitality.